



# U.S. DEPARTMENT of STATE

## Bosnia and Herzegovina

### International Religious Freedom Report 2005

Released by the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor

The State Constitution of Bosnia and Herzegovina and the entity constitutions of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina (the Federation) and the Republika Srpska (RS) provide for freedom of religion, and individuals generally enjoy this right in ethnically integrated areas or in areas where they are adherents of the majority religion; however, adherents of religions in largely ethnically homogenous areas where they are in a small minority have had their right to worship restricted, sometimes violently. The state-level Law on Religious Freedom, enacted in January 2004, also provides comprehensive rights to religious communities and confers upon them a legal status not previously held in the country.

Overall, respect for religious freedom declined during the reporting period: the number of attacks on religious officials and religious buildings increased markedly. A number of illegally constructed religious objects continued to cause ethnic/religious tension and conflict in a number of communities. Religious communities continued to support and advocate refugee returns for their respective constituencies; however, the number of returns significantly declined during the reporting period. The return process suffered from a lack of funding for reconstruction of housing and infrastructure, local governments' inability or unwillingness to provide necessary services to allow for sustainable returns, and a lack of employment opportunities. The state Law on Religious Freedom protecting the rights of religious communities and creating a government registry allowing them to establish legal status was being implemented by the end of the period covered by this report.

Religious intolerance in the country directly reflects ethnic intolerance because of the virtually indistinguishable identification of ethnicity with one's religious background. Bosniaks generally are associated with Islam, Bosnian Croats with the Roman Catholic Church, and Bosnian Serbs with the Serb Orthodox Church. The Jewish community maintains a very small but important presence in Bosnian society. Despite the constitutional and legal provisions protecting religious freedom, discrimination against religious minorities occurs in virtually all parts of the country. In some communities, local religious leaders and politicians contributed to intolerance and an increase in nationalist feeling through public statements and on occasion in sermons. Religious symbols were often misused for political purposes.

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government and leaders from the four traditional religious communities in Bosnia and Herzegovina as part of its overall policy to promote human rights and reconciliation.

### Section I. Religious Demography

The country's territory is divided into two entities, the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina (the Federation) and the Republika Srpska (RS), with a separate administrative district in Brcko. The country has an area of 19,781 square miles. In June 2004, the State Agency for Statistics estimated that the population was 3.8 million, although a reliable census has not been conducted since 1991. Reliable statistics on the precise membership of different religious groups remain unavailable.

Ethnic groups identify very closely with distinct religions or religious/cultural traditions, including the predominantly Muslim Bosniaks, the predominantly Roman Catholic Croats, and the predominantly Orthodox Serbs. According to the U.N. Development Program's Human Development Report 2002, Muslims constitute 40 percent of the population, Serb Orthodox 31 percent, Roman Catholics 15 percent, Protestants 4 percent, and other groups 10 percent. The small Jewish community has approximately 1,000 believers and maintains a special place in society by virtue of its long history of coexistence with other religious communities and its active role in mediating among those communities. There are also foreign missionaries who preach fundamentalist forms of Islam that tend to be intolerant of other religions and other forms of Islam. There are some reports that Muslims have been offered economic incentives to worship and/or dress in a way that is different from traditional Bosnian Muslim custom.

The rate of religious observance remains relatively low among the traditional religious groups; however, some areas of significantly greater observance do exist, for example among Roman Catholic Croats in the Herzegovina region. For many Bosnian Muslims, religion often serves as a community or ethnic identifier, and religious practice is confined to occasional visits to the mosque or significant rites of passage such as birth, marriage, and death. Nevertheless, religious leaders from the Muslim, Catholic, and Orthodox communities claim that all forms of observance are increasing among young people as an

expression of increased identification with their ethnic heritage, in large part due to the national religious revival that occurred as a result of the 1992-95 Bosnian war. Younger believers who grew up in the post-Communist period also have had more freedom to practice their religions and more access to religious education. Leaders from the three main religious communities observed that they enjoy greater support from their believers in rural areas of Bosnia than from those in urban centers such as Sarajevo or Banja Luka.

Ethnic cleansing during the 1992-95 war caused internal migration and refugee flows, which almost completely segregated the population into separate ethno-religious areas. Increased levels of returns, which peaked in 2002, continued to slow significantly in 2004-05, leaving the majority of Serb Orthodox adherents living in the RS and the majority of Muslims and Catholics still living in the Federation. Within the Federation, distinct Muslim and Catholic majority areas remain. However, returns of Serb Orthodox adherents and Muslims in recent years to their prewar homes in western Bosnia and Muslims to their prewar homes in eastern Bosnia have shifted notably the ethno-religious composition in both areas. Returns of Catholics to central Bosnia also took place in smaller numbers.

In Bosnia and Herzegovina, there are eight muftis located in major municipalities across the country: Sarajevo, Bihac, Travnik, Tuzla, Gorazde, Zenica, Mostar, and Banja Luka. The more conservative Islamic communities in Bosnia are located in the Federation in cities such as Travnik, Bociinja/Zavidovici, Tesanj, Maglaj, Bugojno, and Zenica. Bosnia's Roman Catholic community maintains its Bishops' Conference as an overarching organizational and regional structure, with bishops residing in Mostar, Banja Luka, and Sarajevo; the Franciscan order maintains its strongest presence in Central Bosnia near Sarajevo and in Herzegovina. The Serb Orthodox Church maintains greater influence in the eastern RS, with the most influential bishops residing in Trebinje and Bijeljina. The small Jewish community, like most other small religious groups in Bosnia including Protestants, has its strongest support in Sarajevo.

Missionary activity is limited, but growing, and includes a small number of representatives from the following organizations, some of which have their central offices for the region in Zagreb or another European city outside of the country: Seventh-day Adventists, Jehovah's Witnesses, Krishna Consciousness, and the Baptist Church.

## **Section II. Status of Religious Freedom**

### **Legal/Policy Framework**

The State Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and individuals generally enjoyed this right in ethnically integrated areas or in areas where they were adherents of the majority religion; however, adherents of minority religions in areas where one group represented an overwhelming majority had their right to worship restricted, sometimes violently. The constitutions of both entities also provide for freedom of religion.

The State Constitution attempts to safeguard the rights of the three major ethnic groups (Bosniaks, Serbs, and Croats), and by extension the three largest religious communities, by providing proportional representation for each group in Government and in the military. As a result of the government structure created by the Dayton agreement, which ended the Bosnian conflict in 1995, parliamentary seats and most government positions are apportioned specifically to members of the three "constituent peoples." These stipulations often result in constitutional discrimination against "others" and sympathizers of certain faiths who do not fit neatly into these three groups. For example, the country has a three-member joint Presidency composed of one representative chosen specifically from each of the three major ethnic groups, with a chairmanship that rotates every 8 months. As an attempt to address this lack of opportunity for members of other religious faiths, the president of the Jewish community--again, by virtue of the Jewish community's general impartiality in the political arena--was by common consensus accorded the leadership of the important Civil Service Agency, which is tasked with selecting civil servants for government posts based on merit as opposed to political ties, ethnicity, or religious affiliation.

Bosnia's state-level Government does not officially recognize any religious holidays. Entity and cantonal authorities routinely recognize religious holidays celebrated by members of the area's majority religion, with government and public offices closed on those days.

The state Law on Religious Freedom governs religion and the licensing of religious groups, and provides for the right of all to freedom of conscience and religion in Bosnia. It grants churches and religious communities legal status and allows them concessions that are characteristic of a nongovernmental organization (NGO). The law also creates a unified register for all religions within the Bosnian Ministry of Justice, while the Ministry of Human Rights and Refugees is tasked with documenting every violation of religious freedom. The four traditional religious communities in the country (Muslim, Catholic, Serb Orthodox, and Jewish) were required to re-register in the central registry book but did not need to submit all the documents required to register a new religious community. According to the provisions of the law, any group of 300 adult citizens may form a new church or religious community with a written application to the Ministry of Justice. The Ministry of Justice will issue a decision within 30 days of the application, and an appeal may be made to the Bosnian Council of Ministers. The law, which came into force in March 2004, allows minority religions in the country to register legally and to operate without unwarranted restrictions. Some small religious communities have complained that the registration procedure is excessively bureaucratic and complex and that the Ministry of Justice is not issuing decisions in a timely fashion.

Political parties dominated by a single ethnic group remained powerful and continued to identify closely with the religion associated with their predominant ethnic group. Some political parties claimed to be multiethnic. Some clerics have

characterized hard-line nationalist political sympathies as part of "true" religious practice. Some religious leaders were also significantly involved in politics.

The lines dividing politics and religion are often blurred, particularly during pre-election periods, when religious sermons and services are sometimes misused for campaigning purposes. Many political party leaders are former Communists who have manipulated the core attributes of their particular ethnic group, including religion, to strengthen their credibility with voters. For example, offices of local Bosnian Serb mayors in the RS are often decorated with religious icons, although few officials practice religion in any meaningful sense.

During the reporting period, the entity, cantonal, and municipal governments gave varying levels of financial support to the four major religious communities. Religious communities tended to receive the most funding in areas where their adherents were in the majority. Religious education in Bosnia and Herzegovina is largely decentralized, as is the education system generally. The canton and entity governments and the Brcko District authorities have responsibility for education; there is no national education ministry or policy. Public schools offer religious education classes, but with the exception of Brcko, schools generally offer religious instruction only in the area's majority religion. In theory, students (or their parents, in the case of primary school students) have the option to choose not to attend these classes. However, in practice, students of the majority religion and sometimes also of minority religions face pressure from teachers and peers to attend the classes. For example, the RS requires Serbs to attend Orthodox religion classes but does not require attendance for Bosniaks and Croats. However, Bosniak and Croat students often attend these classes anyway because they are reluctant to be singled out as different from their classmates. If a sufficient number of students of minority religion(s) attend a particular school (20 in the RS, 15 in the Federation), the school is required to organize religion classes on their behalf. However, in rural areas, there are usually no qualified religious representatives available to teach religious studies to the handful of minority students. Minority students are often widely scattered across remote areas, making it logistically difficult to provide classes even when a teacher is available. In the Federation's five cantons with Bosniak majorities, schools offer Islamic religious instruction as a 2-hour per week elective course.

In Sarajevo, Tuzla, Travnik, Konjic, and Zenica/Vares, students may attend Catholic school centers. Although primarily Croat, these schools are open to students of other ethnicities/faiths. These centers have both primary and secondary schools, and although the principals are priests, the schools are open to all faiths and the majority of teachers are not religious officials. The curriculum is identical to the curriculum applied in schools in areas with a majority Croat population. In cantons with Croat majorities, all Croat students attend the "elective" 1-hour weekly Catholic religion course for primary and middle schools.

The state Law on Religious Freedom reaffirms the right of every citizen to religious education. The law calls for an official representative of the various churches or religious communities to be responsible for teaching religious studies in all public and private preschools, primary schools, and universities throughout Bosnia. However, by the end of the reporting period, this provision of the Law on Religious Freedom had not been fully implemented. Its implementation is difficult in Bosnia's often-segregated school systems, particularly where there is political resistance from nationalist party officials at the municipal level.

The Office of the High Representative (OHR), the international administrator for Bosnia established by the Dayton Accords, endorsed a May 2000 declaration signed by the Federation and RS Ministers of Education calling for the introduction of countrywide courses on "Democracy and Human Rights" and the "Culture of Religion." The democracy course continues to be implemented by the U.S.-funded Civitas civic education program as part of the official school curriculum throughout the country. The Civitas course on democracy and human rights is the only part of the curriculum that is taught the same way in every secondary school in the country. The U.S. Government maintains close cooperation with Islamic secondary schools (madrassahs) and Islamic studies faculties at the university level.

The country's four traditional religious communities all have extensive claims for restitution of property that the government of the former Yugoslavia nationalized after World War II and did not return. The state Law on Religious Freedom provides religious communities the right to restitution of expropriated property throughout the country "in accordance with the law." However, there is still no state-level law on restitution, and both entity governments have deferred any real attempt to resolve the issue. The State Commission for Restitution was established during the period covered by this report and was working on drafting a state restitution law. In the absence of state legislation, return of former religious properties continued on an ad hoc basis at the discretion of municipal officials. For example, the Orthodox Bishop's residence and an Islamic community building were recently reconstructed by municipal authorities and returned to the Serb Orthodox and Muslim communities in Mostar. Mostar officials also returned a formerly nationalized apartment building to the Catholic community. In Travnik, municipal officials agreed to return a school building that was housing a public primary school to the Catholic community as part of its Catholic school center. In May 2005, local authorities in Trebinje in the eastern RS returned a commercial building to the Islamic community.

#### **Restrictions on Religious Freedom**

Weak administrative and judicial systems effectively restricted religious freedom and posed major obstacles to safeguarding the rights of religious minorities. In some cases, local governments and police made improvements in protecting religious freedoms, although serious problems remained, including an atmosphere in which abuses of religious freedom occur. For example, local police rarely made arrests in cases of attacks against religious buildings, officials, or believers. Successful prosecutions are extremely rare. Local police frequently allege that juveniles are responsible for these attacks.

Deputies being sworn into the RS National Assembly may choose either a religious oath consistent with their religious tradition

or a nonreligious civil oath. Deputies to the State and Federation Parliaments take nonreligious civil oaths.

The State Constitution provides for proportional representation for each of the three major ethnic groups in the Government and the military. Because of the close identification of ethnicity with religious background, this principal of ethnic parity in effect reserves certain positions in Government and the military for adherents or sympathizers of certain faiths. The military in the RS is staffed overwhelmingly by ethnic Serbs and has only Serb Orthodox chaplains. The Federation military is composed of separate Bosniak and Croat units, as well as integrated units, and has both Muslim and Catholic chaplains. The Federation passed laws during the period covered by this report creating a state-level Ministry of Defense that would integrate the two entity-based armed forces under a unified command and control, but the mechanics of integrating the chaplain services still remained an open question.

In early post-war years, RS authorities frequently did not intervene to prevent the violent obstruction of efforts to rebuild some of the 618 mosques and 129 churches in the RS that were destroyed or significantly damaged during the 1992-95 war. The most recent such incident was in 2001 when a violent protest disrupted the laying of the cornerstone for the reconstruction of the historic Ferhadija mosque in Banja Luka. Local police also subsequently failed to conduct a serious investigation into most of these incidents. In Zvornik, the Islamic community and the city continued negotiations over an alternative mosque site, although by the end of the period covered by this report, the negotiations had failed to reach a satisfactory conclusion, and the issue continued to be a source of contention.

During the reporting period, the municipality of Travnik in the Federation partially complied with a 2003 decision by the Human Rights Chamber (now the Constitutional Court) ordering the municipal government to relocate a public school housed in a building formerly owned by the Roman Catholic Archdiocese. The municipality returned half the building to the Archdiocese for use as part of its Catholic school center. However, the other half remained in use as a public school. Negotiations to relocate the public school were ongoing at the end of the period covered by this report.

In the absence of a law governing property restitution, municipal and cantonal authorities have broad discretion regarding disposition of contested property nationalized under the Communist government of the former Yugoslavia. Many officials use property restitution cases as a tool of political patronage, rendering religious leaders dependent on politicians to regain property taken from religious communities. Other unresolved restitution claims are politically and legally complicated. For example, the Serb Orthodox Church is seeking the return of the building which currently houses the University of Sarajevo's Economic Faculty and compensation for the land on which the state Parliament building is located. The Jewish and Muslim communities also have claims to substantial portions of what is now prime Sarajevo commercial real estate. The Catholic community has a large number of potential claims in Banja Luka.

#### **Abuses of Religious Freedom**

The RS and Federation Governments, local governments, and police forces frequently allowed an atmosphere in which abuses of religious freedom could take place. Reported attacks on religious buildings, officials, and minority believers increased significantly during the reporting period. The misuse of religious symbols and buildings for political purposes had a negative impact on interreligious dialogue and interethnic relations in many communities. The absence of a police force willing to protect religious minorities, and a judicial system willing to prosecute crimes against those minorities, posed major obstacles to safeguarding minority rights. While new officers continue to be accepted into the police academies under strictly observed ethnic quotas, the goal of establishing effective, professional, multiethnic police forces throughout the country will take years of concentrated effort. Administrative and financial obstacles to rebuilding religious structures impeded the ability of religious minorities to worship freely and contributed to the slow return of minority refugees in many areas.

A significant number of citizens remained internally displaced or refugees abroad following the 1992-95 war. Virtually all had fled areas where their ethno-religious community had been in the minority or had ended up in the minority as a result of the war. Both organized and spontaneous returns peaked in 2002, and they continued to fall sharply in 2004-05.

There were a number of controversial and highly politicized cases involving the illegal construction of religious buildings or monuments on private or government-owned land. In these cases, the buildings or monuments were built to send a political message to minority believers about the dominance of the majority ethno-religious group in that area, creating ethnic tensions and impeding the process of reconciliation. Three significant cases remained unresolved during the reporting period: the presence of a Serb Orthodox Church on the property of a Bosnian Muslim woman in the RS town of Konjevic Polje, despite the absence of local Serb residents; the presence of a Serb Orthodox Church, again in the absence of Orthodox believers, in the middle of a majority Islamic community in the RS town of Divic; and the presence of a large stone cross and cement foundations for the stations of the cross in the ethnically divided town of Stolac in Herzegovina. In contrast, during the reporting period, the Islamic community decided to voluntarily remove the illegally constructed mosque on property formerly owned by the Serb Orthodox Church in Bradina near Konjic.

In May 2004, the Federation Minister of Spatial Planning ordered the removal of the Stolac stone cross and cross foundations, and after a number of delays in response to political and religious sensitivities, a lawsuit was filed in April 2005 which prevented the implementation of the removal order pending a ruling by the Constitutional Court. In May 2005, Bosnian Croat residents of Stolac completed the illegal construction of a cross-shaped monument to Croats killed during World War Two in the partisan-run prisoner of war camp in Bleiburg, Austria. The monument is illegal because Bosnian law prohibits new construction within a 2-kilometer (1.2 mile) radius of a national historic monument (in this case, an archeological site containing medieval tombstones).

Numerous incidents against religious targets in all three ethnic majority areas were reported throughout 2004 and the first half of 2005. All the major religious communities in the country reported a significant increase in the number of incidents during the period covered by this report.

There were a number of incidents directed at Bosniak Muslims during the period covered by this report. In October 2004, two suspects were arrested for damaging a mosque in the eastern RS town of Visegrad. The vandalism took place during the Islamic holy month of Ramadan. In January 2005, the building of the Islamic community in Foca in the RS was vandalized. In April 2005, unknown perpetrators wrote insulting graffiti on the Sefer Begova mosque in Banja Luka. In May 2005, 26 graves in the historic Muslim cemetery in Prnjavor in the RS were desecrated. An investigation by local police was ongoing. In June 2005, several Muslim graves were desecrated in the Brezicani cemetery near Prijedor.

There were also incidents directed at Bosnian Croats and the Roman Catholic Church during the period covered by this report. In November 2004, vandals desecrated a number of tombstones in the Catholic cemetery in Bijelo Polje. In January 2005, windows of the Catholic church in Kladanj in the Federation were broken. In March 2005, 11 former Prijedor police officers charged with war crimes in connection with the 1995 abduction and murder of Catholic priest Tomislav Matanovic and his parents were acquitted of all charges. The prosecutor was appealing this verdict. In May 2005, three graves in Prijedor's Catholic cemetery, including the Matanovic family gravesite, were desecrated.

There were incidents directed against members of the Bosnian Serb Orthodox community during the period covered by this report. In late 2004 and early 2005, anti-Serb graffiti appeared in Sarajevo and nearby Ilidza. In January 2005, unknown perpetrators broke several windows of the Orthodox Church in Trnovac, near Tuzla in the Federation. In March 2005, an Orthodox priest and his assistant were physically attacked in Dobrinja, near Sarajevo. Religious leaders of the Muslim, Catholic, and Jewish communities publicly condemned this incident, and police arrested the suspected perpetrator. In June 2005, several church flags were stolen from outside the Orthodox Church in Glamoc.

There were no reports of religious detainees or prisoners.

#### **Forced Religious Conversion**

There were no reports of forced religious conversion, including of minor U.S. citizens who had been abducted or illegally removed from the United States, or of the refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

#### **Abuses by Terrorist Organizations**

There were no reported abuses targeted at specific religions by terrorist organizations during the period covered by this report.

#### **Improvements in Respect for Religious Freedom**

During the reporting period, the Catholic and Islamic communities conducted several joint projects. For example, in January 2005, the Islamic community magazine Preporod and community magazine Svijetlo Rijeci, of the Franciscans, conducted a joint project in which journalists from Preporod interviewed Cardinal Vinko Puljic, the head of the Catholic Church in the country, and journalists from Svijetlo Rijeci interviewed the Reisu-l-Ulema Mustafa ef Ceric, the head of the Islamic community. The resulting articles were published in both magazines simultaneously and introduced each community to differences and similarities of the two faiths, with the goal of improving mutual understanding and respect.

The Catholic and Orthodox bishops of the country continued to meet regularly to discuss issues of mutual concern and interest. In February 2005, the Catholic and Orthodox bishops issued a joint statement in honor of the Christmas season. The statement underlined the importance of peace and reconciliation and stressed the commonly shared beliefs of their two Christian faiths.

In April 2005, the Orthodox bishop of Trebinje in Herzegovina, Vladika Grigorije, gave an interview in which he encouraged indicted wartime Serb leaders Radovan Karadzic and Ratko Mladic to voluntarily surrender to the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY) in The Hague and to allow the judicial process to determine their guilt or innocence. He also declined to characterize Karadzic and Mladic as heroes of the Serb people.

In May 2005, the Archbishop of Canterbury, Rowan Williams, met with members of the Interreligious Council to discuss interfaith dialogue. The Archbishop also delivered a Pentecost sermon at a Franciscan Catholic church in Sarajevo. The Islamic community continued to reconstruct mosques throughout the RS, including those in Bratunac, Seher, and Sukeska. Three mosques were rebuilt and reopened in Banja Luka between July and November 2004. The mosque in Potocari Gornji, near the cemetery for the victims of the Srebrenica massacre, was also being reconstructed. Although in 2003, Foca Mayor Nedeljko Pavlovic and Gorazde Mufti Hamed Efendic agreed to the reconstruction of a Muslim religious facility in Foca, a notoriously hard-line Serb municipality in the RS, there was no indication that reconstruction had begun, in large part because of a lack of funds.

The reconstruction and reconsecration of the historic church of the Serb Orthodox monastery at Zitomislici was completed in May 2005. The church is the oldest Orthodox church in the country, dating from the 14<sup>th</sup> century.

In June 2005, Bosnian government officials participated in the third Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) conference on anti-Semitism and other forms of intolerance. The country joined other participants in adopting a declaration that condemned anti-Semitism, supported education about the Holocaust, and emphasized the need to fight against all forms of religious intolerance and discrimination.

### Section III. Societal Attitudes

Until the 19th century, most of the country's residents identified themselves by religious affiliation. With the rise of Balkan nationalism in the 19th century, the country came to identify itself in ethnic as well as religious terms. This tendency increased during the Communist era when the regime discouraged religious affiliation and targeted religious officials for harassment and persecution, including arrest and detention. Under the Communists, most of the country's population identified themselves by ethnic group or simply as "Yugoslavs." Bosniaks were not considered an ethnic group. Only with the adoption of the 1974 Yugoslav Constitution could Muslims identify themselves as such in the census. Since the country's independence, there have continued to be persons who decline to accept either ethnic or religious identification and consider themselves simply Bosnians.

Religious buildings, clerics, and individual believers in any area where they constitute a religious minority bear the brunt of retaliation for discrimination and violence perpetrated by other members of their religious/ethnic groups in areas where those groups constitute the majority. Because they are powerful symbols of religious identification and ethnicity, clerics and religious buildings are favored targets. Most religious leaders severely criticize violence and nationalism against their own group but can be less vocal in condemning acts against members of other groups.

The 1992-95 war was not a religious conflict. However, the association of ethnicity and religion is so close that the bitterness engendered by the war and the large-scale casualties it caused contributed to mutual suspicion and distrust among members of all three major religious groups.

Despite the constitutional and legal provisions for religious freedom, some discrimination against religious minorities occurs in virtually all parts of the country. Discrimination remains a serious problem in the RS, particularly in the eastern RS, and in Croat-dominated areas of the Federation; discrimination against non-Muslims appears also to have worsened in some Bosniak-majority areas where more conservative Islamic communities reside. Some Muslim communities in areas where Wahhabis and other Islamic fundamentalist movements have gained adherents are deeply divided over how to worship, dress, and perform certain religious ceremonies, including funerals.

While Sarajevo, the Bosniak-majority capital of the country, has preserved in part its traditional role as a multiethnic city, complaints of discrimination remained during the period covered by this report. The media continued to discuss the "Islamicization" of Sarajevo, and some non-Muslims reported feeling isolated and marginalized in the nation's capital. While religious leaders applaud growing religious sentiment among youth, the scars of the war, economic hardship, and a recent history of segregation as a result of post-war returnee movements has in many places also injected a streak of nationalism in the younger generation that at times targeted religious communities.

Numerous buildings belonging to the Islamic, Serbian Orthodox, and Roman Catholic communities were damaged or destroyed during the 1992-95 war, usually in a deliberate attempt at ethnic intimidation. Despite the increase in issuance of building permits for reconstruction of religious buildings by Federation and RS authorities, the religious communities lack funds to rebuild these facilities.

In the immediate postwar period, the major religious communities avoided reconstruction of the more symbolic religious facilities in the country, such as the Ferhadija mosque in Banja Luka, the Aladza mosque in Foca, and the monastery at Plehan near Derventa, but the monastery at Plehan has been partially reconstructed, and efforts are underway to rebuild the church in Plehan with financial support from the Bosnian Croat diaspora. Reconstruction of the historic Ferhadija Mosque in Banja Luka had not begun by the end of this reporting period, but the Islamic community had the necessary permits and was collecting money to fund the construction.

Acts of anti-Semitism against the small Jewish community in the country were relatively infrequent. In January and February 2005, a Sarajevo-based magazine published an article in which the author denied that the Holocaust happened and another in which he personally attacked the leader of the Jewish community. This article was widely condemned by representatives of other faiths and a variety of political parties in Bosnia. Jewish leaders noted a tendency to mix anti-Israeli sentiment with anti-Semitism, as the general public and the media often failed to distinguish between criticism of Israeli policy and anti-Semitic rhetoric.

In November 2004, a local television station was fined approximately \$30,000 for broadcasting a Ramadan sermon that belittled the religious beliefs of non-Muslims.

Leaders of the Muslim, Orthodox, Catholic, and Jewish communities have committed themselves publicly to building a durable peace and national reconciliation. The leaders of these four communities participated in the Interreligious Council of Bosnia and Herzegovina, which operates with the active involvement of the World Conference on Religion and Peace, a U.S.-based NGO, despite occasional significant disagreements. In early 2004, the Catholic Church "froze" its relations with the Council over differences regarding the signing of a bilateral agreement with the Vatican. The Serb Orthodox Church suspended its

participation in the Interreligious Council in April 2004 due to differences of opinion regarding a NATO raid on a Serb Orthodox church in Pale, during which a priest and his son were injured. In early 2005, after a joint meeting between Serb Orthodox and Catholic officials, the leaders of both faiths agreed to resume participation in the Interreligious Council, which continued to meet regularly during the reporting period. The OSCE and the OHR continued to facilitate interfaith meetings at the local level as well.

#### **Section IV. U.S. Government Policy**

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government and leaders from all four traditional religious communities in the context of its overall interfaith dialogue and policy of promoting human rights. The U.S. Government supports the return of refugees, democratization, and protection of human rights throughout the country. The U.S. Government also encourages leaders from all major religious communities to promote a multiethnic society that is conducive to religious freedom. Strong U.S. Government support for full implementation of the Dayton Accords and a politically moderate, multiethnic Government is intended, over time, to improve respect for religious freedom in the country.

The Ambassador frequently meets with the principal religious leaders, individually and collectively, to urge them to work toward moderation and a multiethnic society. The Ambassador has been involved actively as a member of the Executive Board of the Srebrenica Foundation, which oversees the continued development of the Memorial and Cemetery dedicated to victims of the 1995 massacre of Srebrenica-area Muslim men and boys in Potocari. In 2001, the U.S. Government provided approximately \$1 million to help establish the Srebrenica Memorial and Cemetery in Potocari. International and U.S. Government involvement in this issue has helped advance the process of interethnic reconciliation.

The U.S. Embassy funded the development of the countrywide human rights and democracy courses currently being taught in all Bosnian secondary schools. The U.S. Government also supported the work of the Interreligious Council to promote interreligious dialogue and tolerance and to encourage religious communities to play a constructive role in the development of civil society. The U.S. Government is contributing financial support for the restoration of a historic mosque in the RS town of Foca.

In addition, the Embassy engages in an active outreach program with the religious communities at all levels, including hosting speaking engagements by visiting U.S. academics and lecturers, meeting with faith-based charities, and facilitating a university affiliation to create a department of comparative religious studies. The U.S. Government also developed and funded "The Tolerance Project," which provides curricula and trains educators regarding religious tolerance. This project was being implemented by Boston University.

The Embassy publicly criticizes instances of religious discrimination and attacks against religious communities or buildings and encourages leaders from all ethnic groups and members of the international community to respond equally strongly.

The U.S. provides assistance to train lawyers, judges, prosecutors and law enforcement personnel on human rights issues, including religious freedom, and provides much-needed infrastructure assistance to areas with high rates of refugee return to promote the sustainability of return. Many minority returnees also benefited from U.S.-funded income generation grants, micro-credit loans, and technical assistance to boost agricultural productivity.

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